



4th October 2005

Memory Meltdown

Number and password overload leaves people from the West Country with major headache

Almost half of people from the West Country (45%) have landed themselves in trouble by forgetting important numbers or passwords, with nearly one in five (18%) losing money, important data and even their jobs as a consequence, according to research sponsored by printer manufacturer Lexmark.

The rise of Chip and PIN, Blackberries and PC passwords, combined with ubiquitous security codes, number plates and ever expanding phone numbers, means the average Brit now has to instantly recall twenty-one digits or characters from memory *every day*.

Access Denied

An ICM survey of over 1,000 adults showed that far from being a time-saver, pass-code activated technology can zap as many hours as it can save. Over a third of those from the West Country (39%) have lost at least an hour of time through forgetting a number or password and a further 15% have lost more than three hours.

Out of Pocket

Many people from the West Country have found themselves in deep water at work with one in eight (13%) people losing important data or e-mails as a result of forgetting crucial codes. Finances are also taking a hit with four per cent of respondents finding themselves out of pocket after vital numbers slipped their mind. One per cent of people claimed to have lost their jobs as a consequence.

The new research demonstrates how technology designed to make life easier can sometimes complicate things instead. Lexmark sponsored the research to mark the launch of the Lexmark Z735 printer and Lexmark X2350 All-in-One. Designed for maximum simplicity and ease of use,

both printers use just one cartridge —called the ‘Number 1’ —eliminating the need to keep track of multiple cartridges and codes.

“For every technological advance made, we just as often end up taking a step back in terms of making our day to day lives easier,” said psychologist Dr. David Lewis, author of *Information Overload*, who has developed tips to enhance memory and reduce stress in our data-rich society.

- **1. Magic Seven:** Use the seven times rule for names, addresses or phone numbers. Just say them silently to yourselves seven times to help them stick —this helps transfer them to long term memory.
- **2. Purple Elephants:** To remember PINS and numeric pass codes create a sentence in which each *word* has the same number of letters as the number to be recalled. For example to remember the nine digit number 336964356 you might use the sentence: ‘Why (3) are (3) Indian (6) elephants (9) always (6) grey (4) and (3) never (5) purple (6)?’
- **3. Bizarre Mnemonics:** Remember tricky facts by creating a phrase called a *mnemonic*. For example: ‘*Most Volcanoes Erupt Mulberry Jam Sandwiches Under Normal Pressure*’ gives the name of the nine planets moving outward from the sun: Mercury; Venus; Earth; Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto. The more bizarre you make a mnemonic the easier it is to remember!
- **4. Cheat:** Never memorise anything unless there is an excellent reason to do so. As the Chinese say: ‘The palest ink is better than the best memories’. So write it down or note it on your computer. But, for security reasons, **never** carry pass codes and PINS in your wallet or handbag.
- **5. Exude confidence:** Never say ‘I’ve got a terrible memory.’ - it creates a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure. Build your memory by constant practice and the use of memory techniques like those above. Memory is like muscle —the more it gets used the stronger it becomes.

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About Lexmark

Lexmark International, Inc. (NYSE: LXX) makes it easier for businesses and consumers to move information between the digital and paper worlds. Since its inception in 1991, Lexmark has become a leading developer, manufacturer and supplier of printing and imaging solutions for customers in more than 150 countries. Lexmark reported \$5.3 billion in revenue in 2004, and can be found on the Internet at www.lexmark.co.uk.

ICM Research interviewed a random sample of 1006 adults aged 18+ by telephone between 12 and 13 August 2005. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults. ICM is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Further information at www.icmresearch.co.uk